

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A tubular food casing comprising a ~~coated~~ fibrous reinforcement and a coating, said coating permeating the reinforcement and filling interstices therein, wherein the coating, present on at least one side of said reinforcement, comprises at least one film-forming protein ~~and permeates the reinforcement~~,

~~wherein~~[[;]]

if the film-forming protein is water-soluble then the coating further comprises at least one compound which crosslinks the film-forming protein;

said reinforcement is a fibrous support web,

the reinforcement has a weight per unit area of 3 to 400 g/m² and

the fibrous reinforcement consists of a consolidated nonwoven fabric, spunbonded fabric or fibrous paper.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Canceled)

4. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the reinforcement comprises natural and/or artificial fibers.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the protein comprises gelatin, collagen, casein, gluten, zein, ardein, pea protein, cottonseed protein and/or fish protein .

7. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fraction of protein is 2.5 to 95 % by weight, based on the total coating weight of the casing.

8. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the coating, in addition to at least one protein, comprises at least one further natural and/or synthetic polymer.

9. (Original) The food casing as claimed in claim 8, wherein the further natural or synthetic polymer is a poly-acrylate, polyvinyl acetate and/or a (co)polymer having units of vinyl acetate and/or units of saponified vinyl acetate (vinyl alcohol).

10. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 8, wherein the further natural or synthetic polymer is a primary plasticizer.

11. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 10, wherein the further natural or synthetic polymer is an alginate, a polyvinylpyrrolidone, a quaternary vinylpyrrolidone copolymer, a copolymer having units of vinylpyrrolidone, maleic anhydride, methyl vinyl ether, or a branched polysaccharide.

12. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 8, wherein the fraction of the at least one further natural and/or synthetic polymer is up to 50 % by weight, based on the dry weight of the casing.

13. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food casing comprises at least one compound which crosslinks the protein and thereby decreases or cancels its water solubility.

14. (Original) The food casing as claimed in claim 13, wherein the crosslinker is epoxidized linseed oil, a diketene having (C₁₀-C₁₈)alkyl radicals, caramel, tannin, a diepoxide, citral, an aziridine, glyoxal, glutardialdehyde and/or a polyamine-polyamide-epichlorohydrin resin.

15. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food casing comprises dyes and/or pigments.

16. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 15, wherein the fraction of dyes and/or pigments is 0.5 to 12.0% by weight, based on the dry weight of the casing.

17. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food casing additionally has at least one further layer which does not comprise protein.

18. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 17, wherein the further layer is a layer based on polyacrylate, polyvinyl acetate, polyvinylpyrrolidone, polyvinylidene chloride, polyvinyl chloride, polyvinyl alcohol, synthetic rubber, latex, silicone or any mixture thereof.

19. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food casing is internally and/or externally impregnated.

20. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the food casing has one longitudinal seam.

21. (Previously Presented) A method for producing the food casing as claimed in claim 1, said method comprising (i) forming a flat-shaped support material having a predetermined width into a tube, (ii) charging the tube with supporting air to maintain its shape or holding the tube in a round shape by caliber support rings and (iii) seamlessly providing the tube internally and/or externally with protein-containing coating.

22. (Previously Presented) A method for producing the food casing as claimed in claim 1, said method comprising (i) coating a flat-shaped support material on one or both sides with protein-containing coating, (ii) cutting the coated support material if appropriate to appropriate width and (iii) forming the coated support material into a tube and, (iv) bonding the overlapping longitudinal edges of the coated support material firmly to one another.

23. (Previously Presented) An artificial sausage casing comprising the food casing as claimed in claim 1.

24. (Previously Presented) An artificial sausage casing as claimed in claim 23, which is used in shirred form as a shirred stick or in the form of individual sections, the individual sections being closed at one end by a metal or plastic clip, by tying with yarn or by sewing.

25. (Currently Amended) A food casing comprising fibrous material, said fibrous material derived from a flat fibrous material coated on one or both sides with a single coating applied uniformly to the fibrous material, said coating consists of (i) protein, (ii) optional inorganic and/or organic filler, ~~(iii) optional further natural and/or synthetic polymers[[,]]~~ ~~(iv iii)~~ optional secondary plasticizer, ~~(iv)~~ optional dye and/or pigments and ~~(vi)~~ if the protein is water-soluble then at least one compound which crosslinks the protein,

wherein the coating contains a maximum of 5% by weight cellulosic filler,

the flat fibrous material has a weight per unit area of 3 to 1000 g/m²,

~~and~~ the protein comprises gelatin or collagen, and

the coating permeates the fibrous material and fills interstices therein.

26. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fraction of protein is 75 to 95 % by weight, based on the coating weight.

27. (Currently Amended) A tubular food casing consisting of reinforcement and a single coating, and the coating, present on at least one side of said reinforcement, comprises at least one film-forming protein that uniformly coats and permeates the reinforcement filling interstices therein,

wherein if the film-forming protein is water-soluble then the coating further comprises at least one compound which crosslinks the film-forming protein;

said reinforcement is a fibrous support web comprising a consolidated nonwoven fabric, spunbonded fabric, a woven fabric, loop-formingly knitted fabric, loop-drawingly knitted fabric, laid fabric or fibrous paper, and

the casing has a weight per unit area of 78 to 200 g/m² after drying, and a water vapour permeability of 300 to 1500 g/m²d, determined via DIN 53 122.

28. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fibrous support web is formed from cotton fiber, viscose staple, silk, polyester, polyamide, polyolefin, polyvinyl acetate, polyacrylonitrile, polyvinyl chloride or mixtures or copolymers thereof.

29. (Previously Presented) The food casing as claimed in claim 1, wherein said reinforcement is self-supporting, and said coating is applied to only an outside surface of said reinforcement.

30. (Previously Presented) A tubular food casing as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the reinforcement consists of fibrous paper.

31. (Currently Amended) The food casing as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the casings consists of reinforcement and coating, the reinforcement has a weight per unit area of 10 to 130 g/m², the dried ~~coating~~ casing has a weight per unit area of ~~60~~ 30 to ~~92~~ 200 g/m², and

said casing has an extension ranging between 0.1 and 5 % in the longitudinal and transverse direction and water permeability ranging from about 10 to 100 l/m²d at 40 bar.

32. (Canceled) Please cancel Claim 32.

33. (Previously Presented) The tubular food casing as claimed in Claim 25, wherein the protein is collagen.

34. (New) A tubular food casing consisting essentially of a fibrous reinforcement and a coating, said coating permeating the reinforcement and filling interstices therein, wherein the coating, present on at least one side of said reinforcement, comprises at least one film-forming protein,

if the film-forming protein is water-soluble then the coating further comprises at least one compound which crosslinks the film-forming protein;

said reinforcement is a fibrous support web,

the reinforcement has a weight per unit area of 3 to 400 g/m² and

the fibrous reinforcement consists of a consolidated nonwoven fabric, spunbonded fabric or fibrous paper.